

QUESTIONS ON JOHN 14
Answered by Willis E. Bishop

"The reverential awe of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10)

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, as we bow in Your presence today we're mindful of how great Thou art -- holy and high above all that Thou hast created, and yet You have been pleased by the grace of God to dwell in our hearts. We come this morning to thank You that we can name the name of Christ, know You in a personal way, and to be conscious of the fact that you are ever with us and mindful of us. As we turn to the Word again we pray that it shall do for us in this hour what we need most, to encourage us, to undergird us, to bless our joy, to unite us in the things that belong unto the Lord, for we ask it in our Saviour's precious name. Amen.

John 14:1,2: "Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so I would have told you." Then the question comes from this next sentence: "I go to prepare a place for you." What did the Lord mean by, "I go to prepare a place for you"?

I hope you have your thinking cap on because I would not want you to accept what I'm going to say without matching it with Scripture, but I want to make a couple of observations and come to a conclusion or two with regard to our Lord's words, "I go to prepare a place for you."

First of all, **there is a temple in heaven.** Turn to Exodus 25; then to Revelation 11. In Exodus 25 we read concerning Moses. God has given him some information and He's telling Moses to build a tabernacle, and the chapters that follow 25 are filled with the details of what Moses later built and what we call the tabernacle.

Ex. 25:1: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying, 'Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring an offering; of every man that is giving it willingly with his heart ye shall take My offering.'"
Verse 8: "And let them make a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee after the pattern of the tabernacle and after the pattern of all the furnishings thereof, so shall ye make it" [that is, to make this place where God is to dwell].

And God showed Moses a pattern -- he did not see what he was copying, he simply saw the drawings of what he was to make. He was apparently given some information which we read about in the chapters that follow and perhaps a drawing that God provided for him. But what was this a pattern of?

Turn to Rev. 11, beginning to read at verse 15: "And the seventh angel sounded and there were great voices in heaven saying, 'The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.' And the four and twenty elders who sat before God on their thrones fell upon their

faces and worshiped God saying, 'We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, Who art and wast and art to come, because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power and hast reigned; and the nations were angry and Thy wrath is come and the time of the dead that they should be judged and that Thou shouldst give reward unto Thy servants the prophets and to the saints, unto them that fear Thy name, small and great, and shouldst destroy them who destroy the earth.' And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant, and there were lightnings and voices and thunderings and earthquakes and a great hail."

Apart from the time when this particular view takes place, you'll notice the basic fact that there is, verse 19, a temple of God in heaven and there's the ark of the covenant in that temple. I'm convinced that what God gave to Moses as a pattern was a copy of that which actually exists in heaven. There is a temple in heaven.

My second observation is: that temple in heaven did not always exist. Turn to Hebrews 8:1: "Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum [or the main point]: we have such an high priest who is seated on the right hand of the throne of the majesty of the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle [the one up there in heaven] which the Lord pitched [or erected] and not man." Do you see that in the latter part of verse 2? -- "which the Lord erected and not man."

It did not always exist. I'm sure someone will ask, "Well, when did the Lord erect it?" I don't know, but let me take a guess, a guess or surmise from Scripture. In order to do that I need to go way back into eternity past. Before God ever spoke a word and the earth was created, before He commanded and they stood fast, there must have been what we would call an eternal council of the Godhead -- God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. One of the reasons I say that is that in the Scripture Christ is spoken of as the "Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world." And before God ever created anything down here, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, looking down through the years that were to come, if they were to create, saw what would happen to man.

For example, the Father might have said, "If we create man and give him free will, and we must do that or else his worship does not mean anything, he will sin and fall." I suppose there was a little silence in that council for a while, and then the Son said to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, "Yes, and when they do fall, I'll lay aside my robes of glory and I'll go down and pay for their sin." And they thought about that for a while. Then the Holy Spirit spoke up and said, "If you do that, I will come and convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment." And in connection with that council, it was apparently decided that there would be a tabernacle, a temple, established up there which would portray the needs of the human race and the sacrifice that would be necessary -- the Holy of Holies and all that went with the sacrificial system of the Old Testament until Christ came as the perfect Lamb of God. So, it's my guess that back there the Godhead erected a temple in heaven.

Turn to Hebrews 9. My next observation is that sin apparently affected the purity of that temple, even in heaven. The sin question does not relate just to the human race. The sin question affected Satan, who at one time was a perfect created being -- "perfect in the day in which he was created." It affected the angelic realm for it drew many of the angels with Satan; and Satan affected the heavenlies by his fall.

Hebrews 9:20: "Saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you.' And in like manner Moses sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are purged by blood [according to the law], and without shedding of blood is no remission of sin."

In Leviticus chapter 16, following through the day of atonement, the high priest goes into the Holy of Holies on a number of occasions and presents blood on the mercy seat in connection with the sins of his people. Then he goes out and takes some of the mixture of blood as a result of the number of animals that had been slain and goes back in and with his finger anoints the various parts of the tabernacle to cleanse it for use for another year. Now the tabernacle is an inanimate object, but in order to show, apparently because the tabernacle served among other things to deal with the sins of the people, symbolically it was cleansed with the blood of those sacrifices, and that's a copy of what is in heaven.

Hebrews 9 verse 23: "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are antitypes or figures of the true holy places, but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others, for then must He have often suffered since the foundation of the world, but now once in the end of the ages hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."